6 FAH-5 H-140
EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Office of Origin: RM/ICASS)

6 FAH-5 H-141 RATIONALE FOR MANAGING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

a. ICASS is a consultative system. The success of post ICASS councils is largely dependent on how effective such consultations are, whether in council meetings, in working groups, or in smaller meetings. This subchapter provides some guidance on conducting effective meetings.

b. Because council or working-group meeting time is the only official time that business can be transacted, it is precious time, and must be focused on vital affairs to assure effective decision-making. Effective meetings provide a variety of benefits to the entire post community:

(1) Bill payers, service recipients and service providers have confidence that policy decisions are addressed through a planned and orderly process;

(2) The council improves its ability to raise the level of its own future performance;

(3) Members' attention is focused on vital matters;

(4) Time spent on administrative trivia is decreased; and

(5) Qualified people are more willing to serve on the council since they can see that their time is valued.

6 FAH-5 H-142 CHAIRPERSON'S ROLE

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

a. The chairperson has the role of facilitating the group, clarifying purpose, building the team through encouraging collective effort, using a participative and collaborative approach and managing conflicts. Chairs play a key role, along with other members of the post ICASS leadership team, by setting the council agenda and managing the meeting.

b. Effective chairs adopt a nonpartisan approach to running the meeting, being clear to separate any remarks made on behalf of their agency. Effective chairs label any remarks on behalf of their agency, explicitly, so that all will understand that the chairperson had stepped out of his or her role as chair and had assumed a separate role as customer-agency representative. An effective chair rigorously guards against using the chair's position of trust to exact undue benefits for himself or herself or for his or her agency. The chairperson helps the group assimilate new members and accept new ideas with minimal conflict, and helps the council to become disciplined in working toward long-term objectives.

c. The chairperson has a responsibility to ensure that all council members, including service providers, have had their opinions and views considered before a consensus is reached. The chair also bears a key role in deciding when consensus has been reached. The chair needs to guard against shutting off discussion precipitously while avoiding overly long discussions that proceed beyond the point at which a consensus is clear. It takes a certain sensitivity and perceptivity to identify a point when the group has reached consensus and then summarize the decision so that all understand that a resolution has been reached.

6 FAH-5 H-143 ESTABLISHING STANDARDS AND NORMS

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

a. Define a code of operation that the council agrees to observe.

b. Establish what is expected in terms of roles and how the council operates relative to the way the team carries out its work.

c. Ground rules: Be on time, come prepared, and deliver commitments on time.

d. Establish decision-making procedures.

6 FAH-5 H-144 MEETING AND TEAM CLIMATE

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

What is the climate like? Is there freedom to express thoughts and opinions? Is it permissive and friendly, or guarded and formal. Atmosphere is important in creating a learning, collaborative, and trusting environment.

6 FAH-5 H-145 PLANNING MEETINGS

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

In planning meetings:

    (1)   Board members know in advance of meetings what matters of substance are on the agenda through prioritization of agenda items; and

    (2)   The board uses a rational process for the preparation of the agenda, with the participation and contribution of all members. This avoids or reduces "surprises" or unexpected items that may interfere with the orderly conduct of business.

6 FAH-5 H-145.1 The Importance of an Agenda

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

The agenda is the blueprint for the meeting. If care is taken in designing the agenda, the meeting will accomplish what is necessary. The council chair and senior-service provider(s) should meet to plan the agenda after receiving input from other council members about any items they wish to see on the agenda for discussion. Distributing the agenda (and any required back-up material) in advance so that council members can come to the meeting prepared, helps streamline meetings.

6 FAH-5 H-145.1-1 Use of a Consent Agenda

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Some boards use a consent section of the meeting agenda for action on routine items that do not require board discussion. Essentially, such routine items are ones that the council wants or needs to take a position on but that are clearly noncontroversial. A consent agenda can streamline meetings by combining action on standard items into one meeting topic. Normally, the chair will ask if there is a consensus to adopt the items on the consent agenda and, unless there is an objection from one of the council members, approval will be finalized and recorded in the meeting minutes.

6 FAH-5 H-145.1-2 Use of an Information Agenda

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Another technique some boards use to streamline meetings is an information section of the meeting agenda that lists items the board needs to be aware of but that do not require board decision. Examples of information items might be a report on completed staff training, acquisitions made, upcoming events of general interest, or the circulation of drafts for comment at future meetings. Often, the information section of the agenda will have attachments that interested board members can use to better inform themselves on the topic. Of course, where a board member feels strongly about a subject, that member may ask for discussion of the subject.

6 FAH-5 H-145.1-3 Use of an Annual Calendar

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

Some boards use an annual calendar to streamline their meetings. Essentially, the board sits down at the beginning of the year and maps out the various tasks it knows it has to do. The goal is to assign each meeting with a major task while spreading the workload as evenly as possible across the year to avoid marathon meetings and board fatigue. Thus, discussion and review of an annual plan might be the topic for the first board meeting. The following board meeting might consider the annual budget. A third meeting might examine a proposal to expand training. A fourth meeting might assess performance or discuss alterations in the service-provider compensation package. Spreading the workload evenly across the calendar helps keep meetings short. With shortened meetings, members are more likely to appear promptly, knowing that ending times are also designated and likely to be met.

6 FAH-5 H-145.2 Conducting the Meeting Process

(CT:ICASS-5;   07-21-2006)
(Applies to participating ICASS agencies)

a. Assign a note taker, meeting facilitator, process observer, and timekeeper.

b. Clarify purpose of meeting.

c. Review agenda.

d. Cover one agenda item at a time.

e. Establish an appropriate pace. Keep meetings short.

f. Open discussions and encourage dialogue.

g. Maintain focus of discussions.

h. Manage participation and promote interaction.

i. Draw conclusions.

j. Check decisions.

k. Close discussions.

l. Summarize decisions.

m. Agree on action items—what needs to be done, by whom, when.

n. Evaluate the meeting—what went well, improvements.

o. Thank people for their participation.

6 FAH-5 H-145.3 Manage Group Participation

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Solicit input from key members. Recognize that discussions frequently do not bring out what various individual members might be able to contribute. Pay attention to communication patterns: What factors are contributing to misunderstanding? Are people speaking past each other? How clearly do people express their ideas? How clearly does the leader express his or her ideas? Ensure that there is a communication structure that reinforces information sharing.

6 FAH-5 H-145.4 Evaluate Council Meeting Effectiveness

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a. By evaluating council meetings, the group can improve its operational efficiency; this requires regular or periodical reviews of efficiency and developing a method of evaluation. At the conclusion of the meeting, poll members to determine the effectiveness of the meeting. An evaluation helps council chair and council members become aware of how others feel and think about what is going on.

b. Periodic evaluations can help improve the effectiveness of council meetings. Atmosphere can be important to the creation of a collaborative environment of trust. Develop a system of periodic evaluations. For example, at a meeting's conclusion, go around the room and ask how it went. Assess the climate of meetings. Is there freedom to express thoughts and opinions? Is the atmosphere permissive and friendly, or

guarded and formal?

6 FAH-5 H-146 THROUGH H-149 UNASSIGNED